

THIN SKIN, SHORT MEMORIES PLAGUE GOP LEADERS

Republicans Used to Think Questioning the Commander In Chief Was Their Duty

With the United States fighting to establish a stable and democratic government in Iraq while waging a global war on terror, some Republicans continue to lambaste and denigrate anyone who has the audacity to challenge the Bush Administration's conduct of American foreign policy.

Recently, Americans learned that Iraqi prisoners were abused by our soldiers. Both Republicans and Democrats quickly denounced the abuse, and the Senate moved immediately in a bipartisan manner to investigate the wrongdoing and unanimously passed a resolution (92-0) calling for a Senate investigation.

In contrast, House Republican leaders, led by Majority Leader Tom Delay, have kept their eyes trained on the November elections and downplayed the seriousness of the abuse and its ramifications on our efforts in Iraq. Only one public House hearing has been held on the issue and it is unclear when or if more will be held. At the same time, the Majority Leader has launched baseless attacks on Democrats who want to investigate the abuse and who call attention to flaws in the Administration's conduct of the war in Iraq.

GOP leaders would do well to remember that they excoriated President Clinton when American and NATO forces began the successful bombing campaign that ejected Serbian troops from Kosovo and led to the popular uprising that ended the murderous regime of Slobodan Milosevic.

All of us pray for a successful conclusion to this war and our troops' safe return. Now is a time to bring the country together, not divide it with partisan attacks.

IN HIS OWN WORDS: WHAT TOM DELAY USED TO SAY...

- “This is [President Clinton’s] war.” Washington Post, 4/14/99
- “The Kosovo operation is different and oxymoronic. It is a ‘peace war’ waged by ‘peace hawks’ pursuing a dovish social agenda. Peace hawks are global idealists and former anti-war activists, including the youthful Bill Clinton.” Floor Statement, 4/15/99
- “Doing good on a worldwide scale appeals to peace hawks, who are motivated by altruism, not patriotism.” Floor Statement, 4/15/99
- “There's no national interest of the United States in Kosovo. It's flawed policy and it was flawed to go in. I think this president is one of the least effective presidents of my life time. He's hollowed out our forces while running round the world with these adventures.” The Guardian, 5/17/99
- “American foreign policy is now one huge big mystery. Simply put, the administration is trying to lead the world with a feel-good foreign policy.” Floor Statement on Resolution on Peacekeeping Operations in Kosovo, 3/11/99
- “Bombing a sovereign nation for ill-defined reasons with vague objectives undermines the American stature in the world. The international respect and trust for America has diminished every time we casually let the bombs fly. We must stop giving the appearance that our foreign policy is formulated by the Unabomber.” Floor Statement on Resolution on Peacekeeping Operations in Kosovo, 3/11/99
- “Mr. Chairman, I rise today to voice my complete opposition to sending American troops to Kosovo. There is simply no vision to this mission. There is a six-year trend to send American troops anywhere for any reason, but there are no consistent goals that tie all of these missions together.” Floor Statement on Resolution on Peacekeeping Operations in Kosovo, 3/11/99
- “I rise today to state that no defense funds should be used for ground forces in Kosovo unless authorized by Congress.” Floor Statement, 4/15/99

- “So what they are doing here is they are voting to continue an unplanned war by an administration that is incompetent of [sic] carrying it out. I hope my colleagues will vote against this resolution.” Floor Statement on S. Con. Res. 21, 4/15/99
- “It is clear that any deployment to Kosovo will similarly drag on and go enormously over budget.” Floor Statement, 4/28/99
- “When asked the question, ‘what if he does not come to the table,’ they said, ‘well, we will go to Phase 2, and Phase 2 is that we will bomb for a few more days. Then he will be going to the table, by crackie.’ And when we asked, ‘Then, what?’ then they said, ‘well, we will bomb for another week and that will force him to come to the table and this will be all over with.’ And then when we asked, ‘Then, what?’ there was silence. This administration started a war without a plan farther along than two weeks.” Floor Statement, 4/28/99
- “I cannot support a failed foreign policy. History teaches us that it is often easier to make war than peace. This administration is just learning that lesson right now. The President began this mission with very vague objectives and lots of unanswered questions. A month later, these questions are still unanswered. There are no clarified rules of engagement. There is no timetable. There is no legitimate definition of victory. There is no contingency plan for mission creep. There is no clear funding program. There is no agenda to bolster our overextended military. There is no explanation defining what vital national interests are at stake. There was no strategic plan for war when the President started this thing, and there still is no plan today.” Floor Statement, 4/28/99
- “Instead of sending in ground troops, we should pull out the forces we now have in the region. Mr. Speaker, I do not think we should send ground troops to Kosovo and I do not think we should be bombing in the Balkans, and I do not think that NATO should be destroyed by changing its mission into a humanitarian invasion force.” Floor Statement, 4/28/99
- “So what they are doing here is they are voting to continue an unplanned war by an administration that is incompetent of carrying it out. I hope my colleagues will vote against the resolution.” Floor Statement, 4/28/99

- “It’s very simple. The president is not supported by the House, and the military is supported by the House.” As quoted in USA Today, regarding Floor votes on Kosovo, 4/30/99
- “For us to call this a victory and to commend the President of the United States as the Commander in Chief showing great leadership in Operation Allied Force is a farce.” Floor Statement opposing resolution commending America’s successful campaign in Kosovo, 7/1/99

BUT NOW TOM DELAY SAYS...

- “[S]ome people are overreacting [to the abuse of Iraqi prisoners]. The people who are against the war are using this to their political ends.” Associated Press, 5/13/04
- “The war and the national unity to win that war takes precedent (over criticisms). There is a difference in asking questions to try and influence the decisions being made and grandstanding.” UPI, 5/12/04
- "This happened in Vietnam. It's happened in other wars, where the troops wondered if people are really behind them." Washington Times, 5/12/04
- “The Democrat leadership has decided to take a political position and is undermining our troops in the field without any regard...” McLaughlin Group, 05/11/04
- "They want to win the White House more than they want to win the war - and our enemies know it." Houston Chronicle, 05/09/04
- “This morning, in a calculated and craven political stunt, the national Democrat party declared its surrender in the war on terror. For two years, they have strutted down to the floor of the House and, out of sheer, brazen partisanship, undermined our troops, scoffed at our coalition, and shown the terrorists of this world that there are some Americans who will cower under their threats. To say this morning, while our troops are under enemy fire - while American blood is flowing on the battlefield! - that this war is unwinnable is an insult to every man and woman who has ever fought and sacrificed under the flag of this nation. But at least - or perhaps, at most - the Washington Democrats finally have taken a position on the war. And that position - that baseless, partisan, shocking position - is that American troops aren't up to the job. This is what the heirs of Roosevelt and Kennedy have become: a collection of appeasing, partisans who see our every casualty in Iraq as a potential campaign gimmick. They want to win the White House more than they want to win the war - and our enemies know it. I'm not questioning their patriotism - don't let them play that little game again. I'm questioning their judgment and their fitness to lead. The Democrats need to understand that there are consequences for their actions. If Democrat leaders want to show contempt for the troops to score political points, so be it. But they shouldn't be surprised when the American people, in turn, show

contempt for them. There is one man in the Democrat Party right now who can save it from this embarrassing march into appeasement, and save the national security legacy of FDR and JFK - unfortunately for Democrats of good will around the country, he seems to be leading the parade. Victory in the war on terror is not only possible. It is assured. The courage of our troops makes it so. We are going to win, whether that fits the Democrats' campaign plan or not." Delay Press Release, 5/6/04, in response to comments by Representative John Murtha that the war in Iraq may be unwinnable if the Administration did not correct its policies

- "I think it's hypocritical to say on the one hand that you support the troops while on the other hand you say the reason they are risking their lives is wrong. I think it undermines the effort and the unity this country ought to be showing right now." Washington Times, 3/20/03
- "This destructive rhetoric does nothing more than demoralize our troops and second-guess our commander in chief." – Rep. Tom DeLay, Press Release, 3/20/03

WHAT OTHER REPUBLICAN LEADERS SAID...

- “If there is a war, this is a Clinton war, in my opinion.” Rep. Randy “Duke” Cunningham (who voted against S.Con.Res. 21), on ABC’s World News Tonight, 4/29/99
- “Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, this is the most inept foreign policy in the history of the United States. The Pentagon told the President not to bomb, that it would only exacerbate the problems. We have forced over 1 million refugees. 2,012 were killed in Kosovo prior to the bombing. NATO has killed more Albanians than the Serbs did in an entire year, and yet we have exacerbated those problems.” Rep. Cunningham, Floor statement, 4/28/99
- “We want to say, Mr. President, your relationship between the executive branch in this government and the Congress of the United States, the legislative branch of this government, comes before your relationship with allied nations; that in order to have a unified American government presence on any position we should take, Mr. President, we should come to agreement within this great government first.” Former Majority Leader Dick Arney (who voted against S.Con.Res. 21), Floor Statement, 4/28/99
- “Mr. Speaker, this evening the House had an emotionally charged debate about our policy in Kosovo, and contrary to remarks made after the vote, this was not a vote against the troops. This was a vote against the policy of this administration. All of us support the troops and the young men and women who are doing their duty.” Rep. Ed Whitfield, Statement, 4/28/99

MORE REPUBLICAN CRITICISM OF THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF - BOSNIA IN 1995...

In November and December of 1995, Congress debated the deployment of United States Armed Forces to Bosnia and Herzegovina. H.R. 2606 was a Republican bill offered to prohibit the use of funds from being used for the deployment of U.S. forces in the region. H.R. 2606 passed the House 243-171, but failed in the Senate 22-77.

In addition, the Republican-led House Resolution 302 "reiterates serious concerns and opposition to the President's policy" regarding the deployment of American peacekeepers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This Resolution passed 287-141. In contrast, a Resolution offered by Democrats (H. Res. 306), which "unequivocally supports the men and women of the United States Armed Forces who are carrying out their mission in support of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina" was defeated 190-237, with 219 Republicans voting against it.

- "It is neither in the President's nor the country's best interests to forge ahead with a plan to send United States troops to Bosnia without the full support of the American people through their representatives... Congress has a duty to exercise its power of the purse when it feels the President is making a grave mistake." Majority Leader DeLay, Floor Statement, 11/17/95
- "I believe the President has made a grave mistake. He has put Americans in danger without clearly articulating what national security interest requiring the use of United States forces is at stake in Bosnia." Majority Leader DeLay, Floor Statement, 11/17/95
- "US troops will be deployed in Bosnia no matter what the Congress does. Congress should support the troops without endorsing the president's policy." Sen. Arlen Specter, CNN, 12/14/95
- "Even though, as Commander in Chief, the President has the constitutional authority to commit United State soldiers to Bosnia, I cannot support a plan that does not minimize the risks to, and maximize the security of, our troops, especially a deployment that is not vital to our national security interest." Rep. Sam Brownback, Floor Statement, 12/14/03
- "It is because I support the troops, because I am concerned about their well-being, that I am opposed to sending troops to Bosnia. I have no doubt that the Americans who serve in the Armed Forces of the United States will go where their Commander in Chief sends them. They will serve proudly. They will do their job well. That is not the issue here." Sen. Phil Gramm, Floor Statement, 12/6/95

WHAT OTHERS SAID...

- “DeLay, the Republican House Whip who rounded up votes for impeachment, pushed his colleagues hard to oppose a Democratic resolution supporting the air war. He did so even though House Speaker Dennis Hastert backed the Resolution.” Syndicated columnist E.J. Dionne, in the Washington Post, 5/4/99
- “There was only one thing worse than Clinton’s war, as House Republican Whip Tom DeLay liked to call it. That was Clinton’s peace.” Syndicated columnist Mary McGrory, in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 6/12/99
- “Of course, dissent is not disloyalty, and of course, Tom Daschle -- who spent from 1969 through 1972 in uniform as an Air Force intelligence officer -- personally has more active-duty military experience than DeLay, Hastert and Lott, to say nothing of Vice President Dick Cheney, combined. At a time when three out of four college graduates served in the military, this quartet of red-white-and-blue patriots figured out how to game the system and qualify for deferments to skip the burden of defending the nation they so obviously love.” - Mark Shields, CNN, 3/24/03
- “‘This is his [President Clinton’s] war,’ said DeLay the other day. And DeLay will be damned if he is going to do anything to help Clinton in his war. ‘The president will run the president’s war,’ he said. ‘We’ll consult with the president, but we’ll get our work done.’ And what is that work? Well, part of it seems to be giving aid and comfort to the Yugoslavian war aims and working against the war aims of the United States. . . This is not ‘his’ war. It is ours. And people who do not understand that do not understand the idea of nationhood, and they call into question their own fitness to lead.” - Syndicated columnist Michael Kelly, 5/4/99
- “Let us not forget: Debate and dissent are the very oxygen of democracy. This nation was founded not by conformists or the complacent, but by dissenters who had the courage to defend their beliefs and their homeland -- which sounds a lot more like Tom Daschle than his critics. “ - Mark Shields, CNN, 3/24/03
- “Maybe any politician who said these things is, in DeLay's words, unfit for national leadership. If so, DeLay has the power to remove that politician from office today. These things were never said about Bush's war in Iraq. They were said on the House floor four years ago—on March 11, April 28, and May 6, 1999—about President Clinton's war in Kosovo. And they were said not by Howard Dean, but by Tom DeLay.” – William Saletan, Slate, 3/26/03